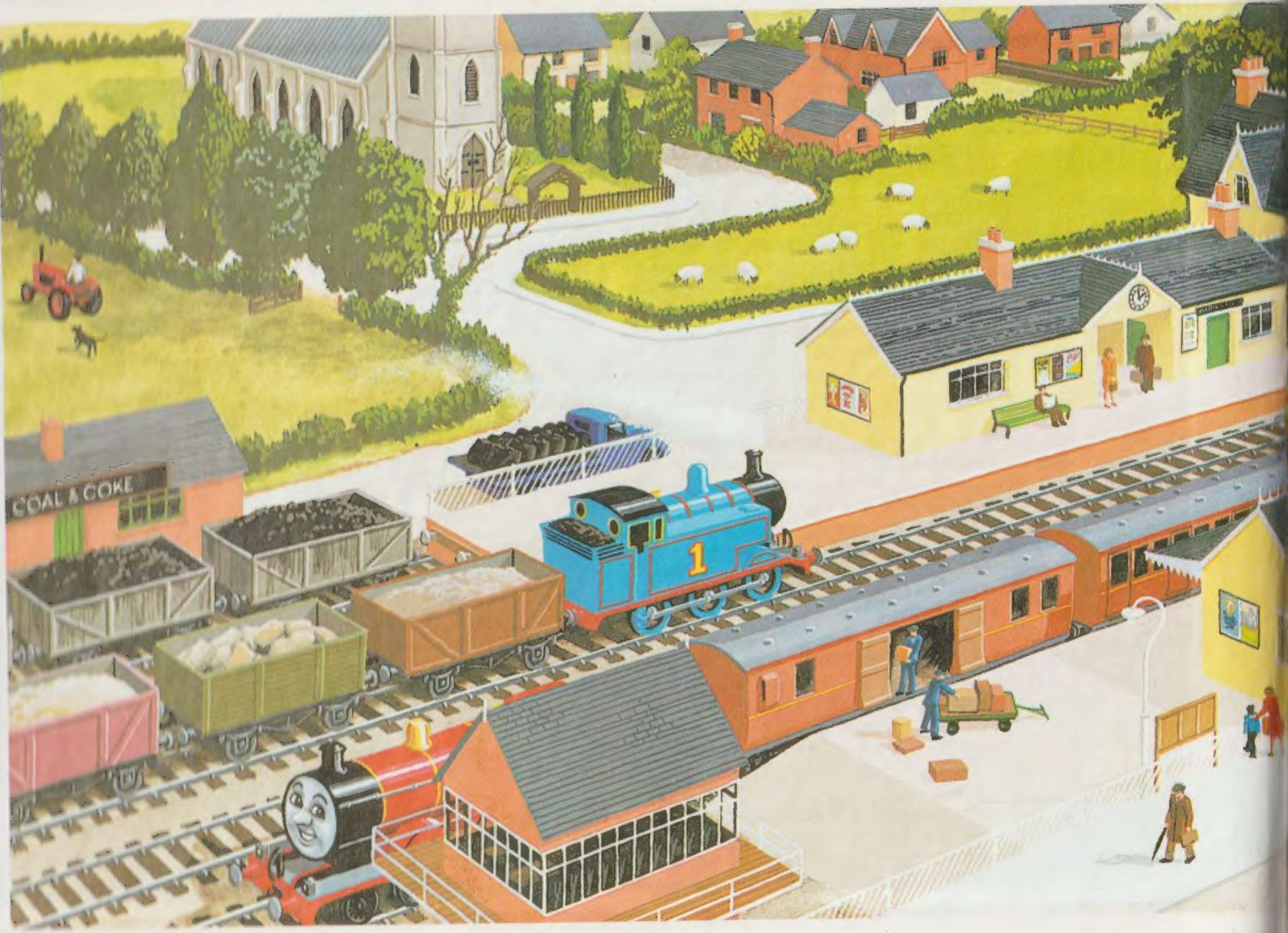


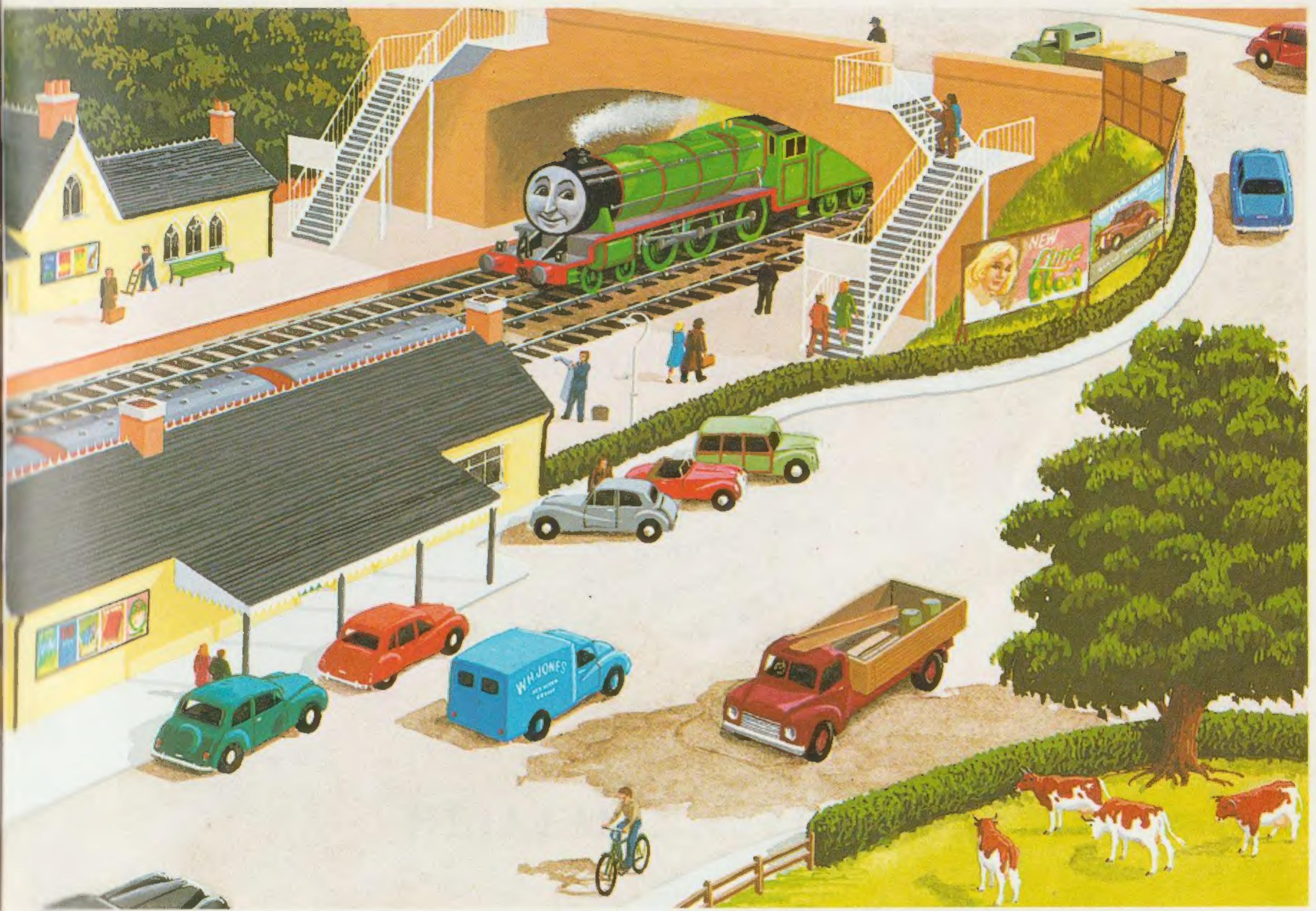
THE RAILWAY SERIES No. 33

Thomas and the Twins



CHRISTOPHER AWDRY







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CHRISTOPHER AWDRY

with illustrations by

CLIVE SPONG

HEINEMANN · LONDON

The author and publishers are most grateful to Mr. P. Hawkins of the Wheal Martyn China Clay Museum, St Austell, and to Mr. Bill Rogers of St Austell, for assistance in the preparation of this book.

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Dear Friends,

Bill and Ben keep asking if they can be in a book again. Well, in Cornwall recently, we met Bill and Ben's twins and talked to the driver of one of them, at Par. He set me thinking, and this is the result: if our china clay twins enjoy being in a book again, they should thank him not me. I hope you will enjoy the stories too.

THE AUTHOR

Scrambled Eggs

“The bridge across the river needs repair,” the Fat Controller told the engines. “I shall have to make a weight limit across it for a while. Percy and Daisy will be all right, and Toby too, but Thomas is too heavy . . .”

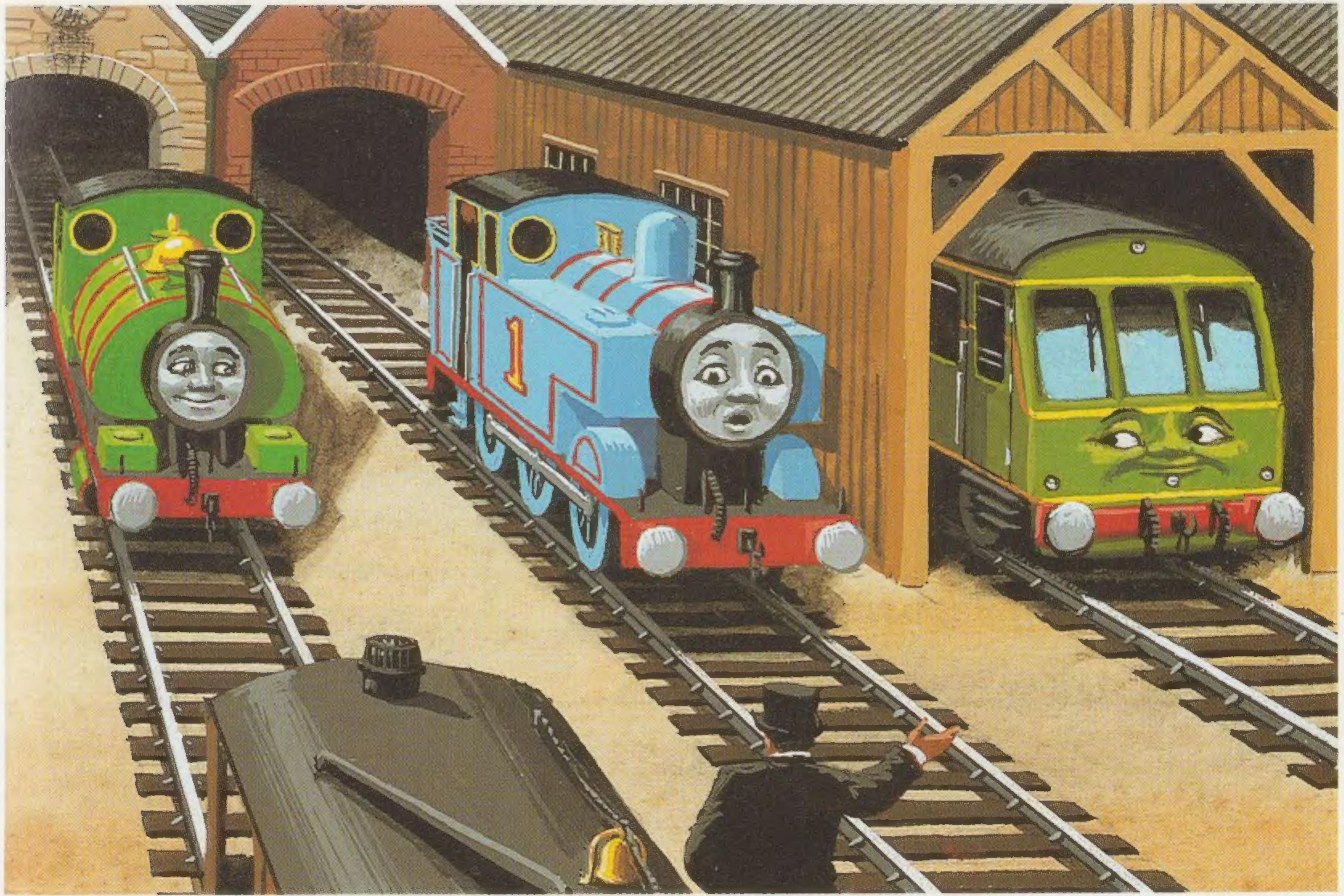
Thomas looked anxious.

“How would you like to go and help Edward?” suggested the Fat Controller.

“Can Annie and Clarabel come?” asked Thomas.

The Fat Controller shook his head.

“They’ll be needed here, I’m afraid,” he said. “Daisy can’t carry all your passengers on her own.”



Percy promised to look after Annie and Clarabel, but they were sorry to see Thomas go.

To cheer Thomas up, Edward took him to see Bill and Ben, the twin engines who lived at the china clay harbour.

“Oh dear, not another blue engine,” said Bill cheekily. “First Edward, then Donald and Douglas and now . . .”

“Don’t forget Gordon,” interrupted Ben. “He came here once, by mistake, so he said. I don’t think he enjoyed it much,” he added innocently.

The twins both chuckled, remembering.



"No, but seriously Edward," said Bill, "why doesn't the Fat Controller paint engines a proper colour – like us, for instance?"

Thomas let off steam indignantly.

"Let me tell you," he began . . .

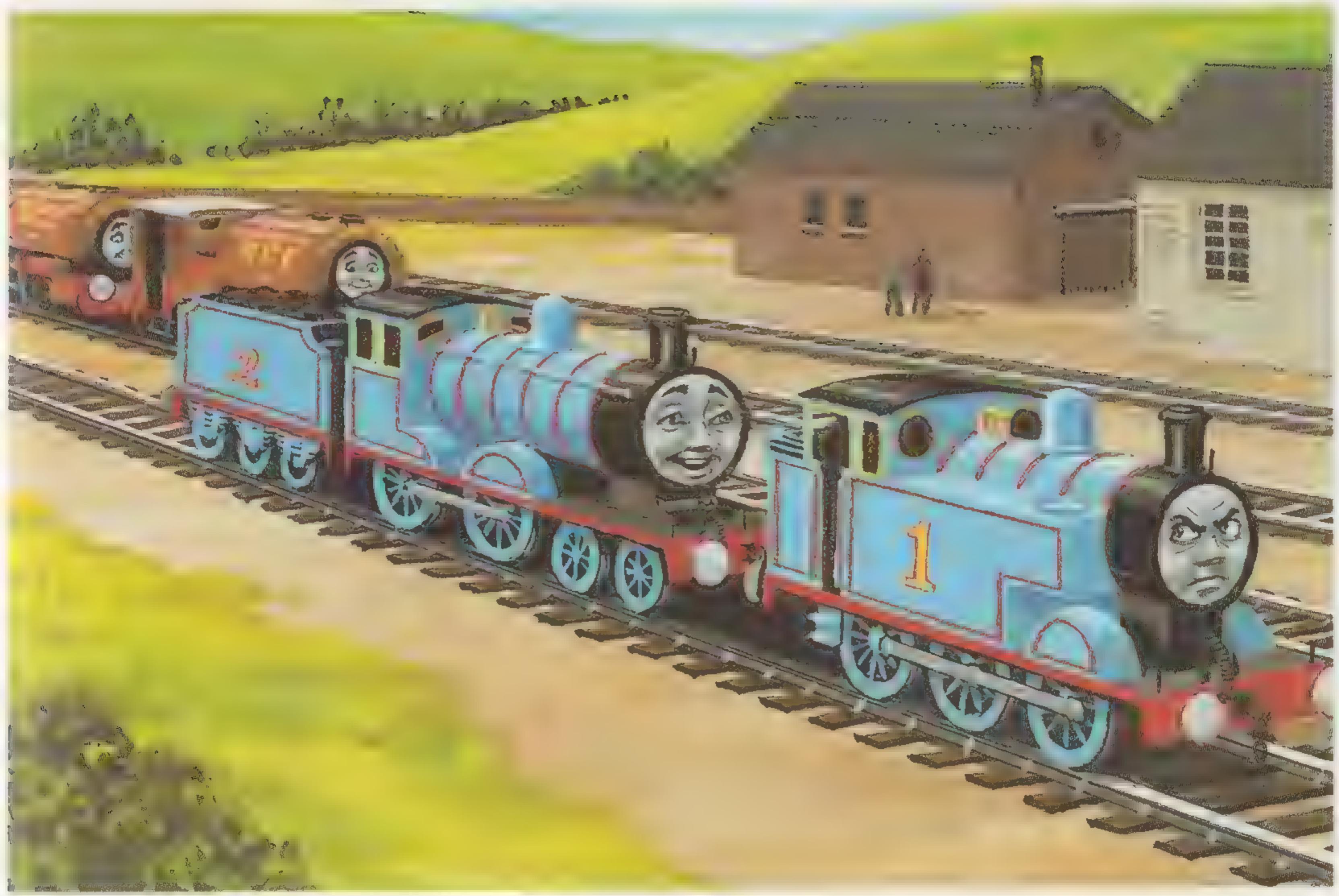
"All right you two," laughed Edward. "Go and move those trucks, or there won't be room for any more."

Bill and Ben, unabashed, went off happily.

"You just don't have to take them too seriously," explained Edward.

Thomas smiled ruefully.

"I wish I knew how you deal with them," he said.



Near the harbour the line crossed a lane. The crossing had no gates. The lane led to a farm which made butter, and supplied eggs and milk to shops in the town.

One morning the farmer had difficulty starting his lorry. He did it at last, but the lorry jerked along in fits and starts. The farmer was worried about his load of milk and butter and eggs.

“That milk’ll be churned to butter soon,” he muttered to himself as he neared the level crossing.



'The lorry lurched across the rails. The back wheels were just clear when its engine made a noise like a tired sheep and stopped. The back of the lorry was still jutting out over the railway line.

'The farmer struggled to start it again, but it would not go. He had just got down to telephone for help, when he heard a train approaching.

'Thomas wasn't going fast. When he saw the lorry he set his brakes hard, but he couldn't stop. He hit the lorry with a loud crash.



The force of the blow spun the lorry round. Splintered wood flew everywhere and eggs, butter and milk were catapulted over Thomas.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed, and stopped.

"Just look at my poor old lorry," said the farmer, emerging from behind the hedge where he had been sheltering. "What a way to make an omelette."

The driver made sure that Thomas wasn't hurt, then stood back and surveyed the mess. He began to laugh.

"It's not funny," said Thomas crossly. An egg-yolk trickled down his nose, and burst on his buffer.

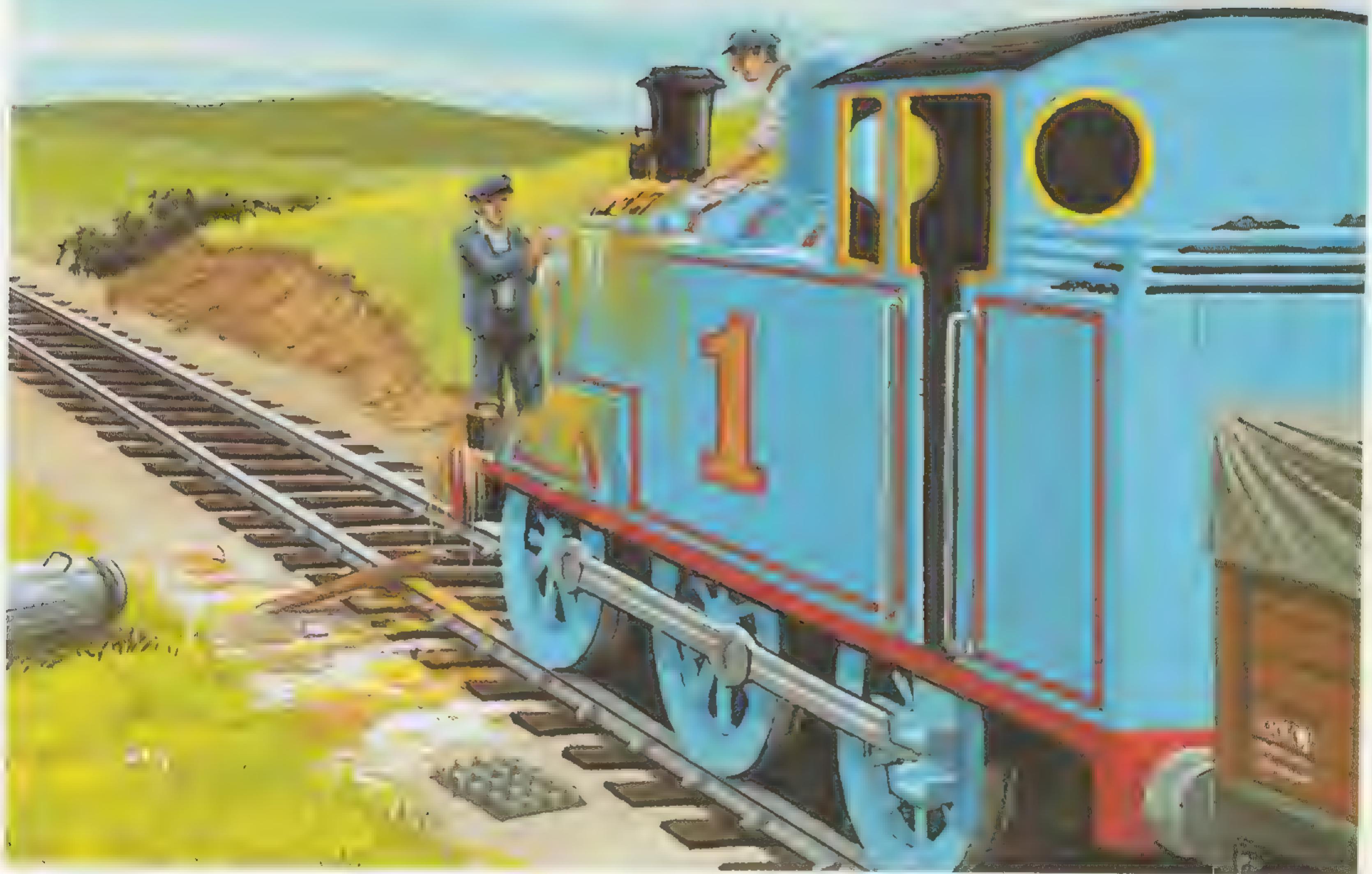


"You're not standing where I am," said his driver.
"You look just like a scrambled egg, Thomas."

"Well if a scrambled egg feels as sticky and wet as I do, then it's very uncomfortable," said Thomas.
"Please clean me."

Both driver and fireman tried hard, but the heat of Thomas's boiler had cooked the eggs, and they were stuck fast.

"Sorry Thomas," said his driver at last. "We can't block the line any longer. We shall have to go on."



At the end of the line, Thomas was taken to Bill and Ben's yard to be cleaned. The twins were there.

"Hullo" said Ben. "What's this?"

"Must be a new engine," said Bill.

Ben inspected the arrival carefully.

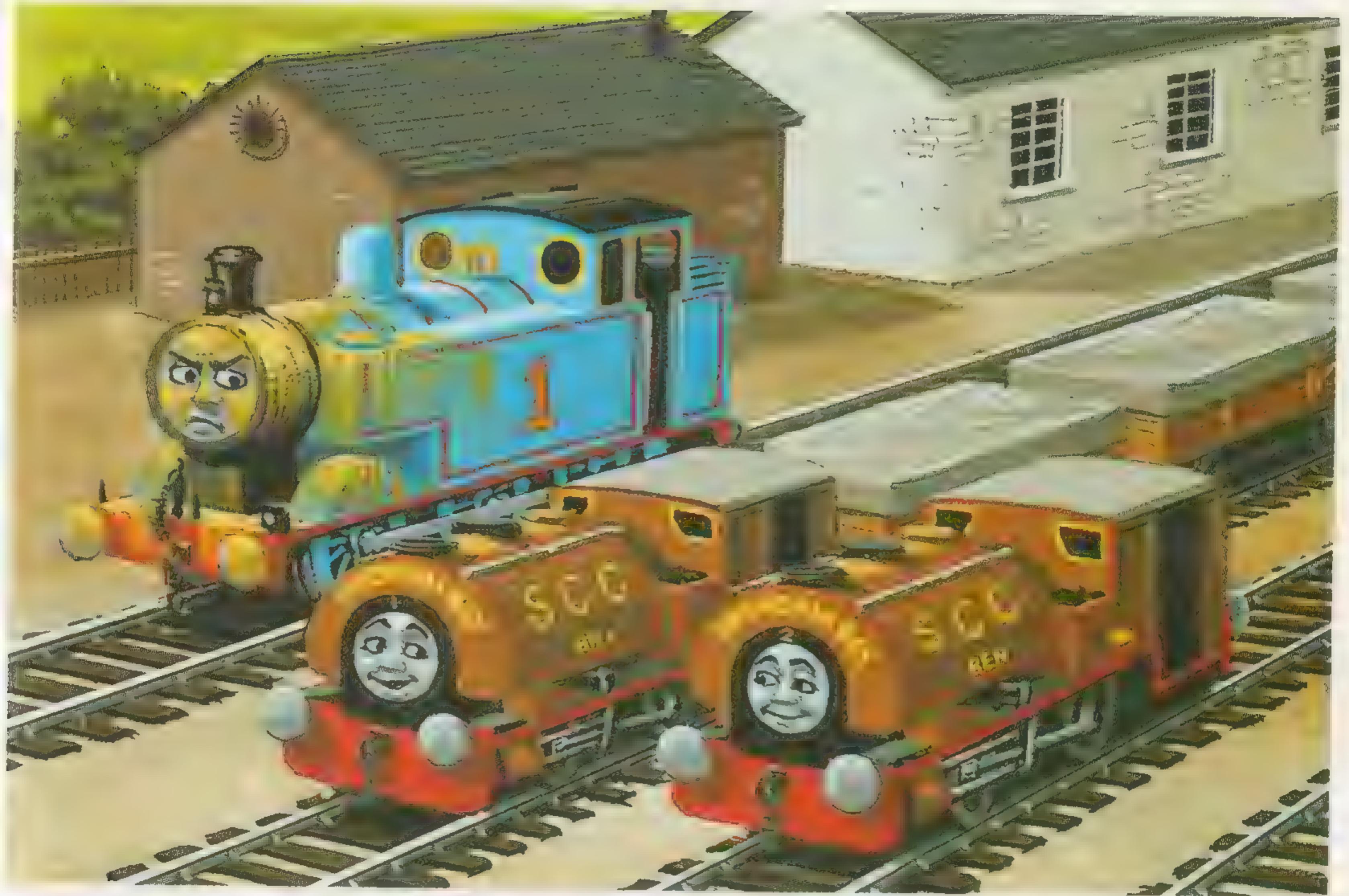
"No Bill," he said. "That's not a new engine – it's Thomas."

"But it's our colour, Ben, and Thomas doesn't think our colour is proper for an engine . . ."

They heard a grinding noise.

"Are your joints stiff, Bill?" asked Ben.

But it wasn't Bill's joints – it was Thomas, gnashing his teeth.



What a Picture!

It took a long time to clean Thomas properly, and the Twins kept teasing him until Edward told them to stop.

"A party of railway enthusiasts is coming soon," he said. "I shan't bring them unless you behave."

Bill and Ben were excited. Enthusiasts always made a fuss of them and took their photographs.

"When?" they squeaked in unison.

Edward smiled, and winked at Thomas.

"Next week," he said, "but not if you don't behave."

Bill and Ben promised that they would.



"Is it next week?" they asked Thomas each morning. Thomas enjoyed keeping the twins in suspense: "Next week never comes," he would answer mysteriously.

Bill and Ben weren't worried; they kept urging their crews to polish them.

"What's the hurry?" they laughed. "The enthusiasts aren't going to eat their breakfasts off you, you know."

"No," Bill whispered, "but they might if we were Thomas."

The twins thought this a huge joke. It was lucky that Edward and Thomas weren't there to hear it.



At last the day came, and the drivers and firemen agreed to give the engines an extra polish. They were sparkling when Thomas arrived with the special train.

Many of the enthusiasts had notebooks, and almost all had cameras. Bill and Ben didn't know which way to look, but they loved it.

Then the visitors queued up for a ride in either Bill or Ben's cab. Their cabs were low, and several visitors forgot to duck, but they didn't seem to mind.



The enthusiasts' visit was almost over when a shunter came running up.

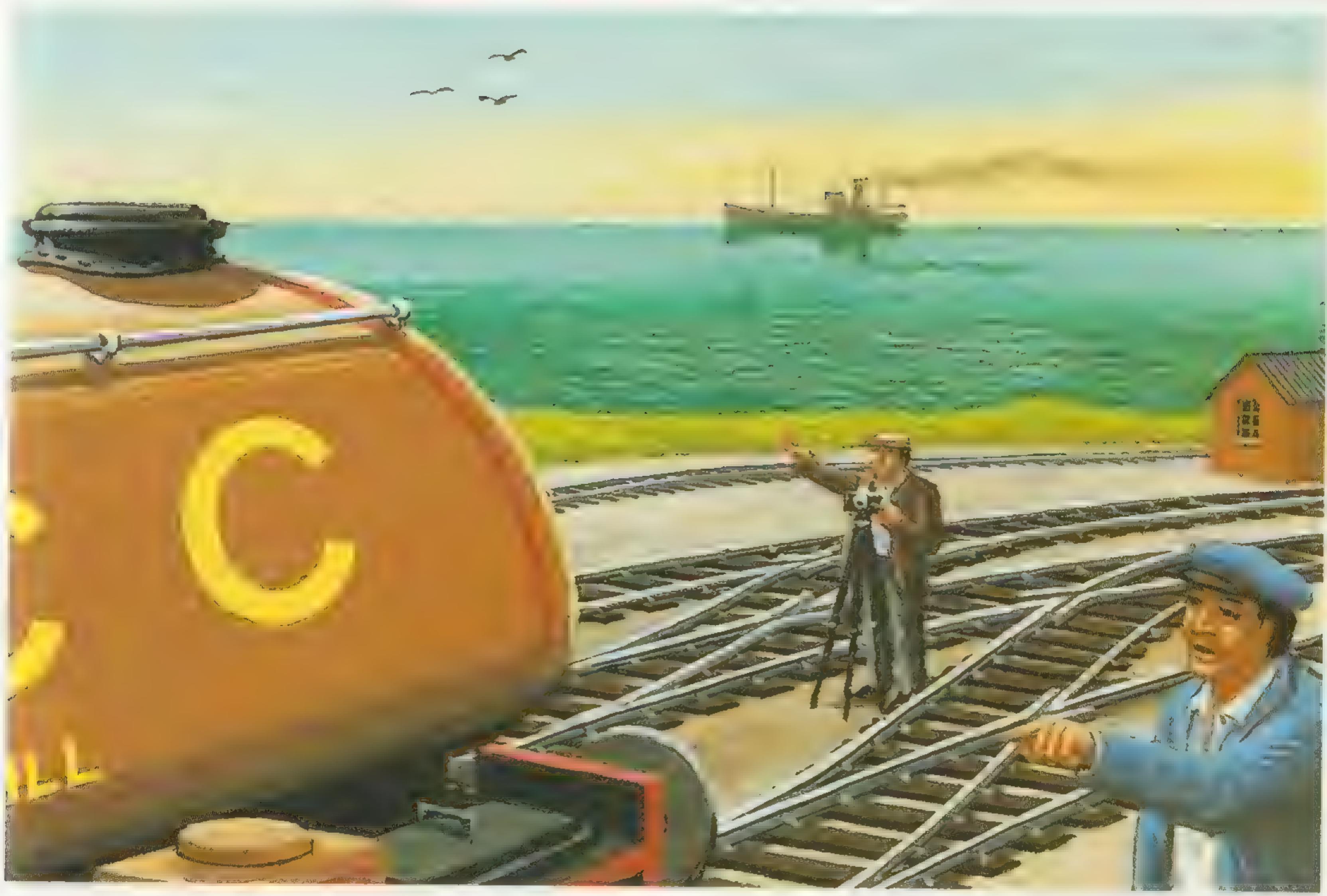
"A ship needs moving before the tide goes down," he said. "One of you see to it please." Ben went at once, and most of the visitors went too, to watch.

Only one man stayed. He had a camera which took "instant" pictures.

"Just one more," he kept saying. Soon even Bill tired of him.

The photographer screwed his camera to a tripod and pointed it at Bill.

"This is it," he chortled. "What a picture."



Ben's fireman ran up to them.

"Ben needs help," he said. "The ship's going aground, and he can't move it on his own."

"Right, Bill," said his driver. "We can't wait any longer."

He turned a tap, and with a hiss and a roar Bill vanished in a cloud of steam. At that moment the photographer pressed the button. When the steam cleared Bill was hurrying off to help his twin.

The photographer peeled the cover from his instant picture, looked at it and threw it down in disgust.



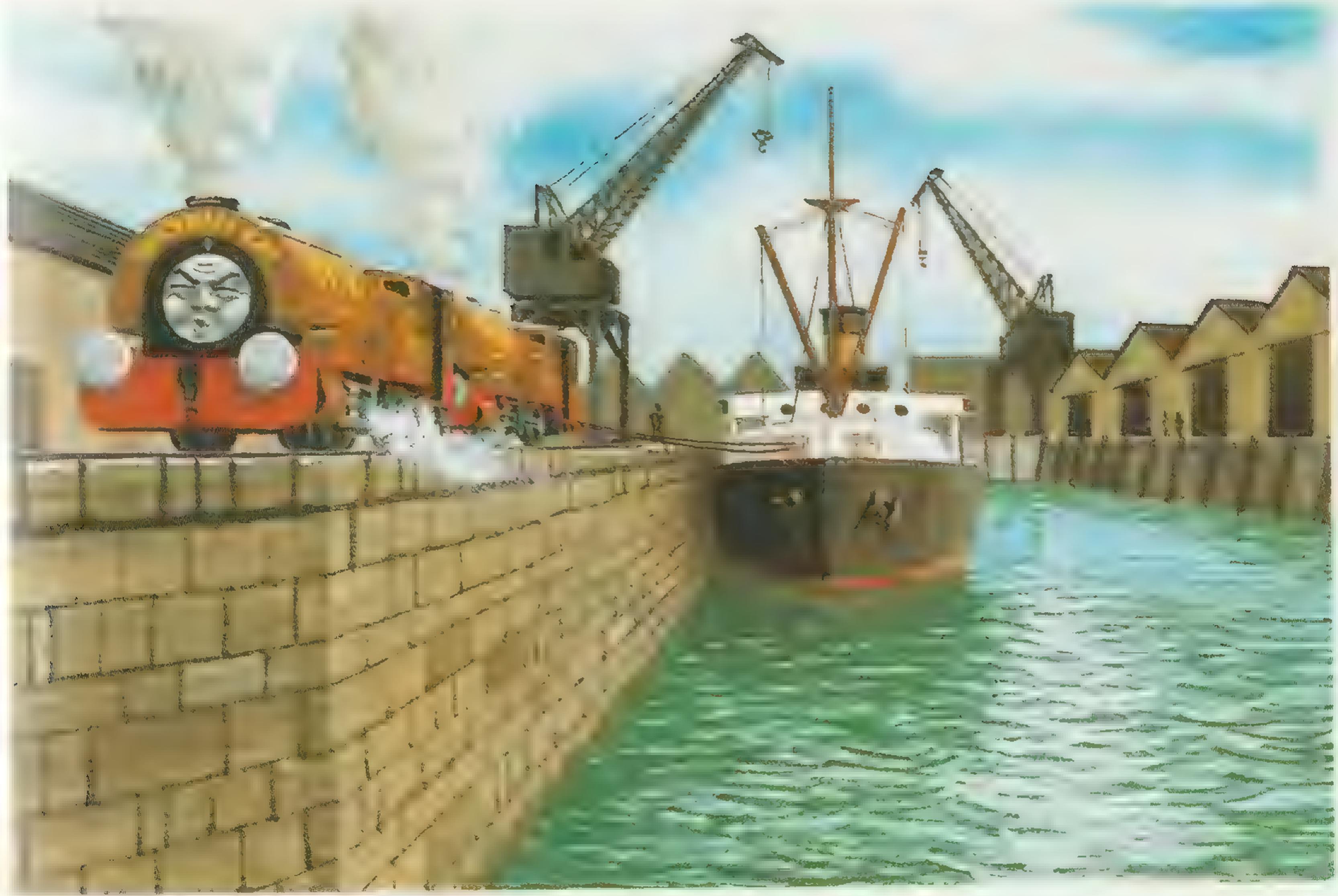
Quickly the engines were coupled together.

"When I say heave, *heave*," instructed Ben. "One, two, three, HEAVE!"

"Come on, come on," puffed the engines. The cable tightened and stretched. At last, with a shudder, the ship slid off the mud and, towed by the engines, glided into deeper water.

Bill's driver found the discarded photograph on the floor. All it showed was a cloud of steam, with, very dimly, Bill's funnel at the top. He showed it to Bill.

"What a picture!" remarked Bill, to no-one in particular.



Trevor Helps Out

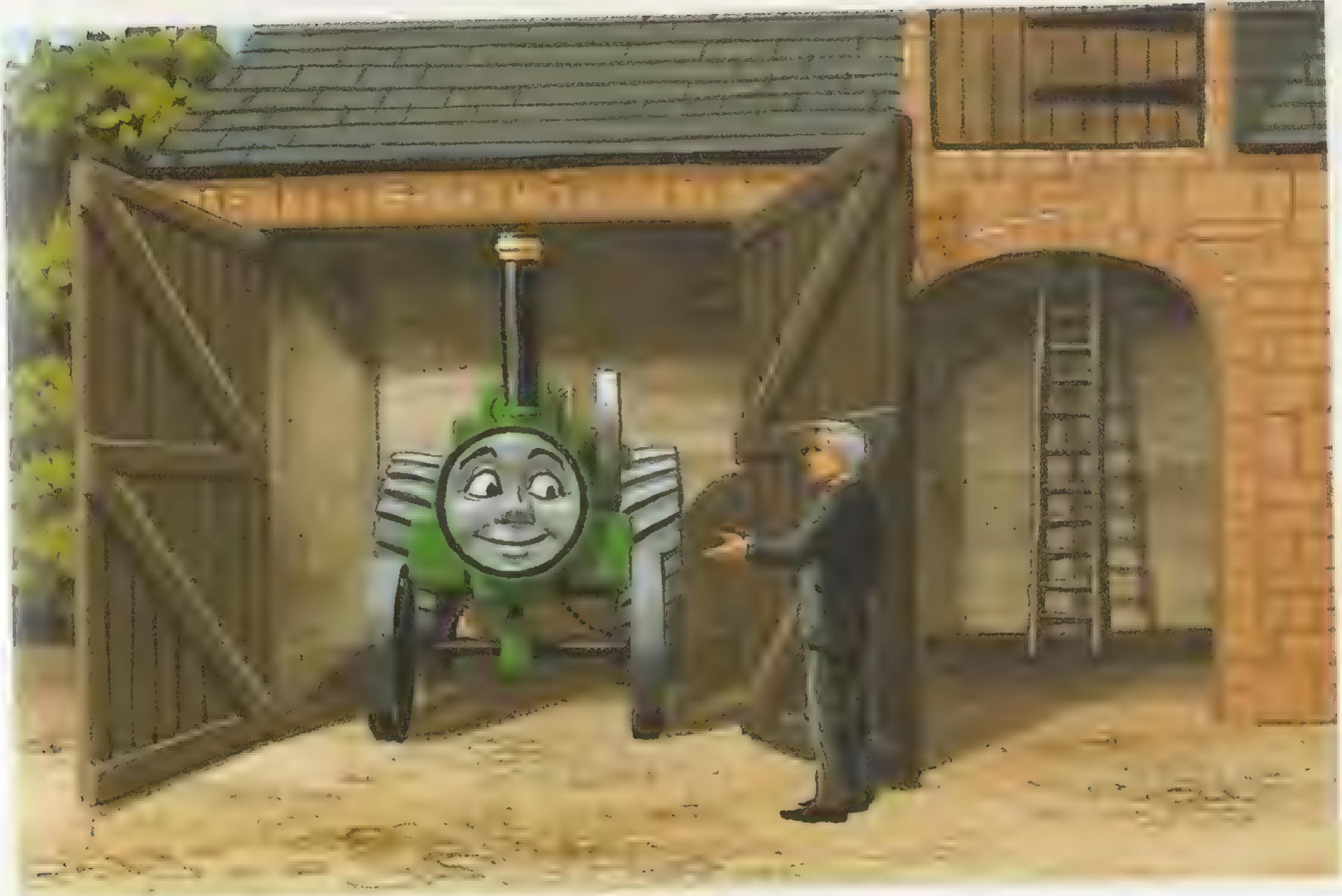
Trevor the traction engine was feeling depressed. He couldn't breathe properly.

"Your boiler needs mending," said his owner, the Vicar, "but I can't afford it at present."

One morning the Vicarage telephone rang. The Vicar answered it, and then hurried out to see Trevor.

"You may be a bit under the weather but you can manage this," he said. "The farmer has a tree down, and wants you to saw it up for him."

When Trevor had steam, they went to the farm and set to work in a field near the railway.

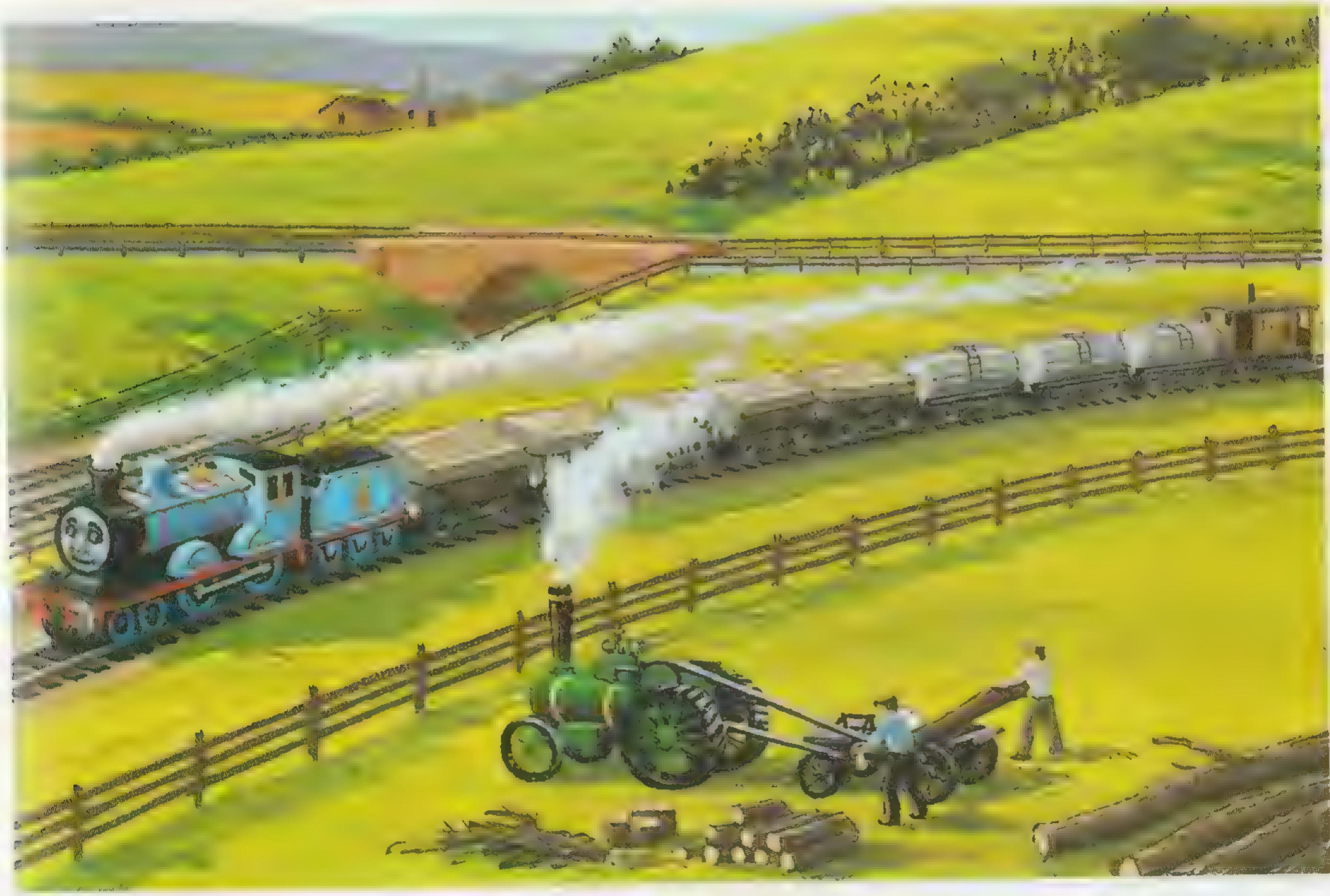


Thomas passed by with Edward's coaches. He whistled cheerfully. Edward liked trucks, and had been delighted to let Thomas have his coaches for a while.

When Edward passed, later that morning, he was pulling trucks with a sort of tent over them. These were specially for carrying china clay – the men called them ‘hoods’.

“Why ‘hoods’,” Thomas had asked Bill and Ben.
“The hoods are those things like tents,” explained Bill.

“They keep the clay dry,” added Ben. “Wet clay goes in tanks.”



But to Trevor they were simply trucks. He was enjoying himself – the only thing he liked better than sawing logs was giving children rides. He chuntered happily as the pile of logs beside him grew.

Edward returned with some empty trucks. As he passed the place where Trevor was working, the line seemed to wobble under him.

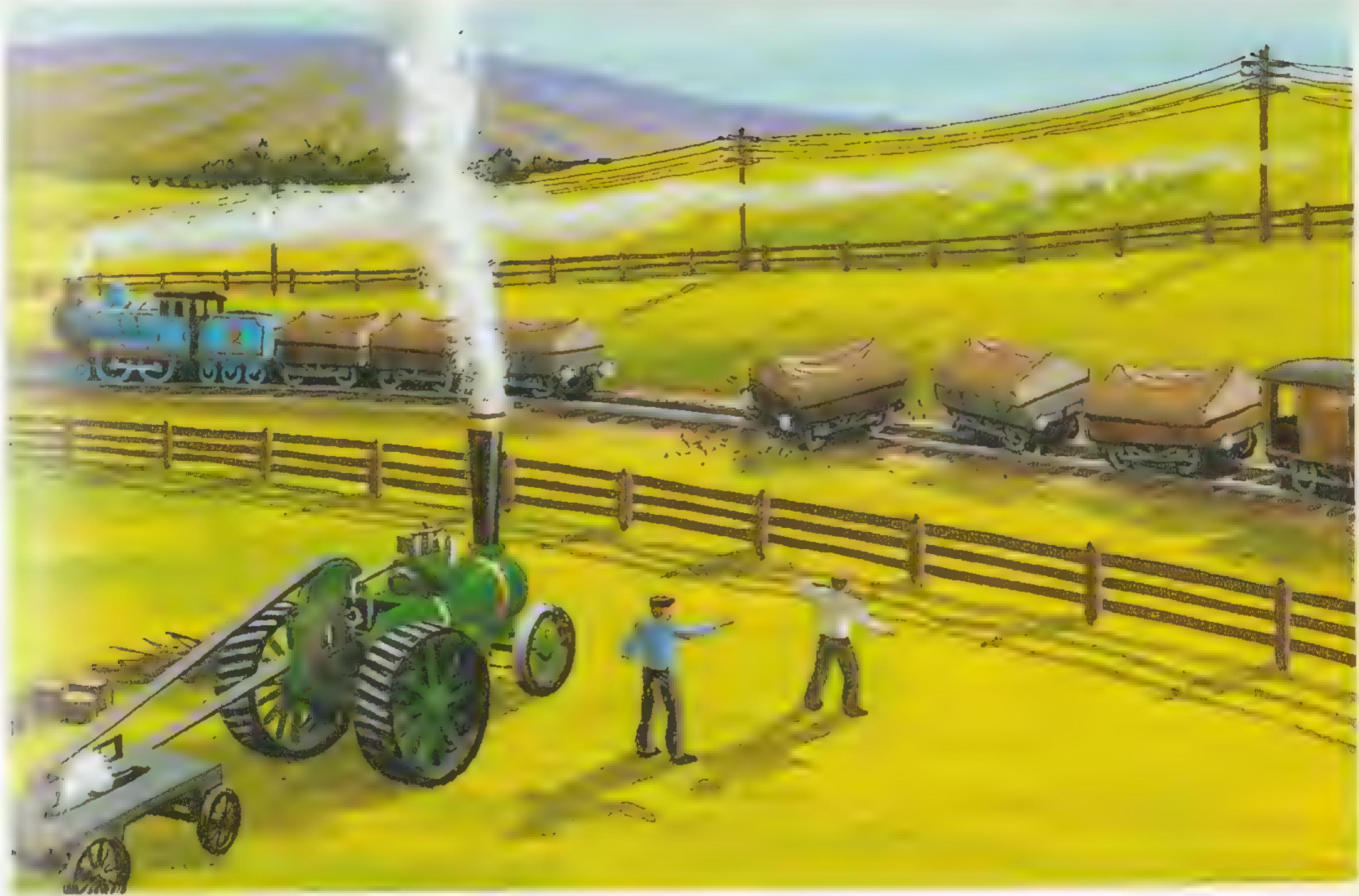
“That feels like a loose rail,” he thought. “We’d better tell the maintenance people.”

At the harbour Edward exchanged the empty trucks for full ones, and set off for the Junction again.



Trevor dozed. The wind had dropped, and it was comfortable in the autumn sunshine. It seemed no time at all before he heard Edward coming back.

Trevor whistled a cheerful greeting. He was watching Edward and so did not see one of the trucks, six from the end, sink, jump and shudder, just at the place Edward had felt a weakness in the line that morning. Sparks flew, a truck wheel jammed and with a crack, a coupling broke. The last six trucks and the guard's van lurched, bumped and stopped.



The guard, safe in his van, blew his whistle. Edward, far in front, didn't hear it, and hurried on without realising what had happened.

But Trevor was closer to the Guard's van than Edward. He heard the whistle, and looked back to see the trucks lying at strange angles.

"Peep pip pip peeeeeeep, peep pip pip peeeeep!" he whistled in horror. "Stop, Edward, stop!"

Edward heard that.

"It's Trevor!" he cried anxiously. "What's wrong?"

"We'd better stop and see," said his driver.



The fireman climbed onto the tender.
“Phew!” he exclaimed. “Look – it’s not Trevor, it’s us!”

The guard went to protect the train, the fireman went to the farmhouse to telephone for help, and the breakdown gang soon cleared the line. That evening the Fat Controller came to see Trevor.

“Thank you, Trevor,” he said. “I’ve heard about your boiler, and because you saved a nasty situation, you’re to go to my Works to be mended. Would you like that?”

“Oh, Sir,” said Trevor. “Thank you.”



Down the Drain

China clay is not quarried, as other minerals are – it is washed out of the ground with strong hoses. Then the mixture of clay and water has to settle and be dried before Bill and Ben can take it away.

Part of the line which the twins use to reach the china clay workings runs near the sea. There is a hollow in the land just here which often floods after heavy rain. Local people called this hollow the ‘Drain’.



The autumn gales which had brought down the farmer's tree for Trevor to cut up were also causing rough seas and high tides. When rain came too, the engine crews looked gloomy.

"A really high tide now," said Ben's driver, "could make real trouble at the 'Drain'."

But though pools of water lay on either side of the line, they grew no larger. Bill and Ben puffed happily to and fro, replacing loaded "hoods" with empty ones. They forgot about the 'Drain'.



Then the rain began again, and the wind strengthened. As the engines went to the claypits that morning their drivers noticed that the water in the 'Drain' was rising.

While Bill arranged the empty trucks, Ben prepared to leave with a train of full ones. At the 'Drain' he found that the water was level with the top of the rails.

"Come on," said Ben bravely. "We must get through, if only to get help for Bill."

"Go back, go back," the wind seemed to shriek.



Ben took no notice. He was halfway over when the rising tide, whipped into a huge wave by the wind, swept across the line.

"Oof!" spluttered Ben as water crashed against his side. "Help!"

With a hiss the water reached his fire.

"Quick, Ben," urged his driver, but it was too late. With a despairing gasp Ben stopped. He was stranded in the middle of the 'Drain', with cold seawater lapping his wheels.

The fireman set off to find help.



"Keep on the sleepers," advised the driver. "We don't want you swamped as well."

The water reached the fireman's waist, but he struggled on. At last, cold and soaking, he reached the Yard. Thomas was there, wondering where his trucks were.

His driver wasted no time.

"Ben must be rescued," he said. "We need a steel cable, a pair of waders and determination."

"Yes," said Thomas doubtfully. He understood the cable, but he wasn't sure about determination and didn't even know what waders were.



Thomas stopped at the water's edge. His fireman put on the waders, and set out, carrying the end of the cable.

Ben was delighted to see him. The fireman fastened the cable-end to Ben's front coupling. Then he uncoupled the trucks, so that Bill, who had come up behind, could pull them clear.

"Right," he said as he joined Ben's driver in the cab. "Let's go."

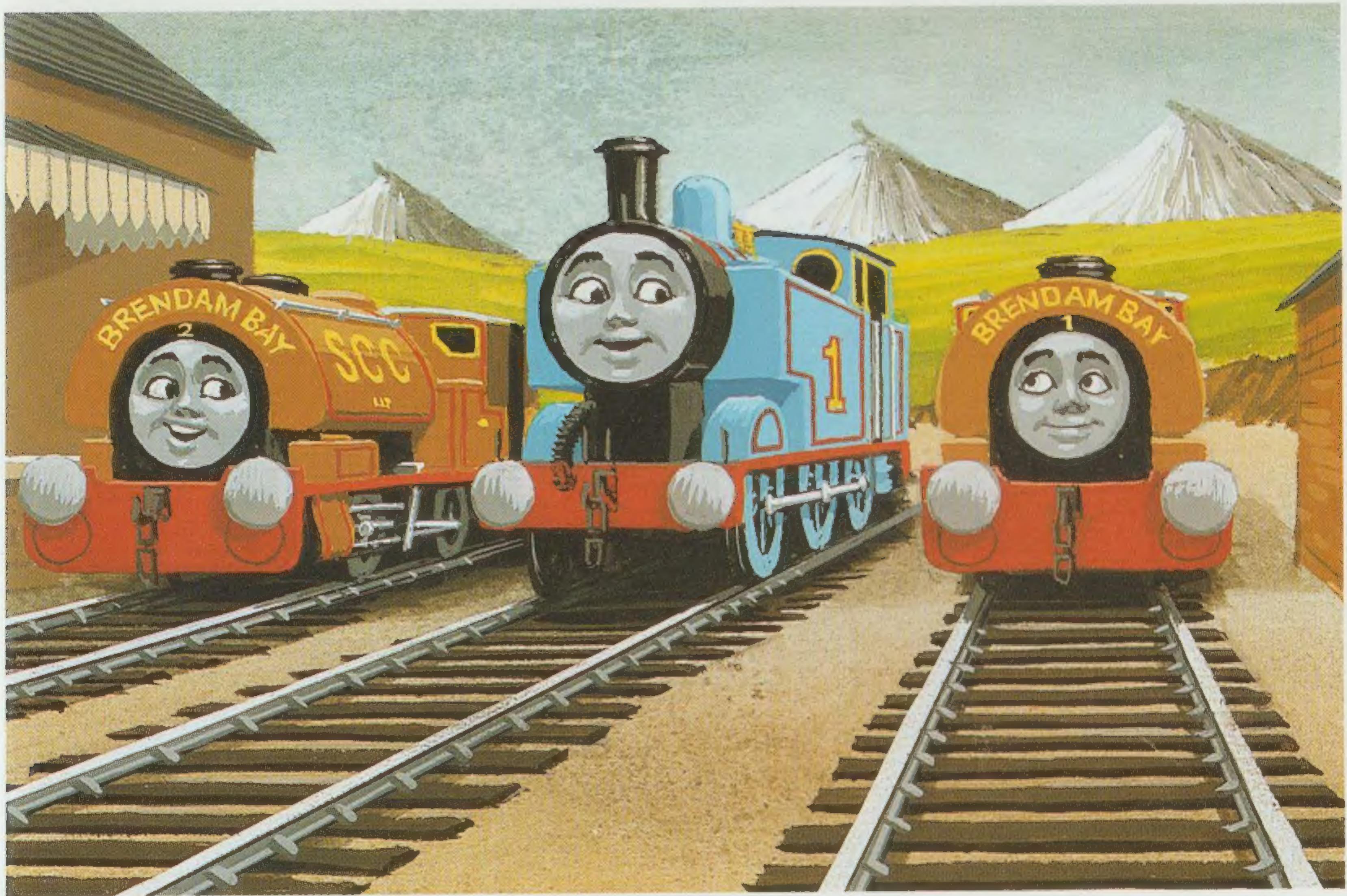
Poor Ben had no steam left to whistle, so the driver and fireman waved to show Thomas they were ready.



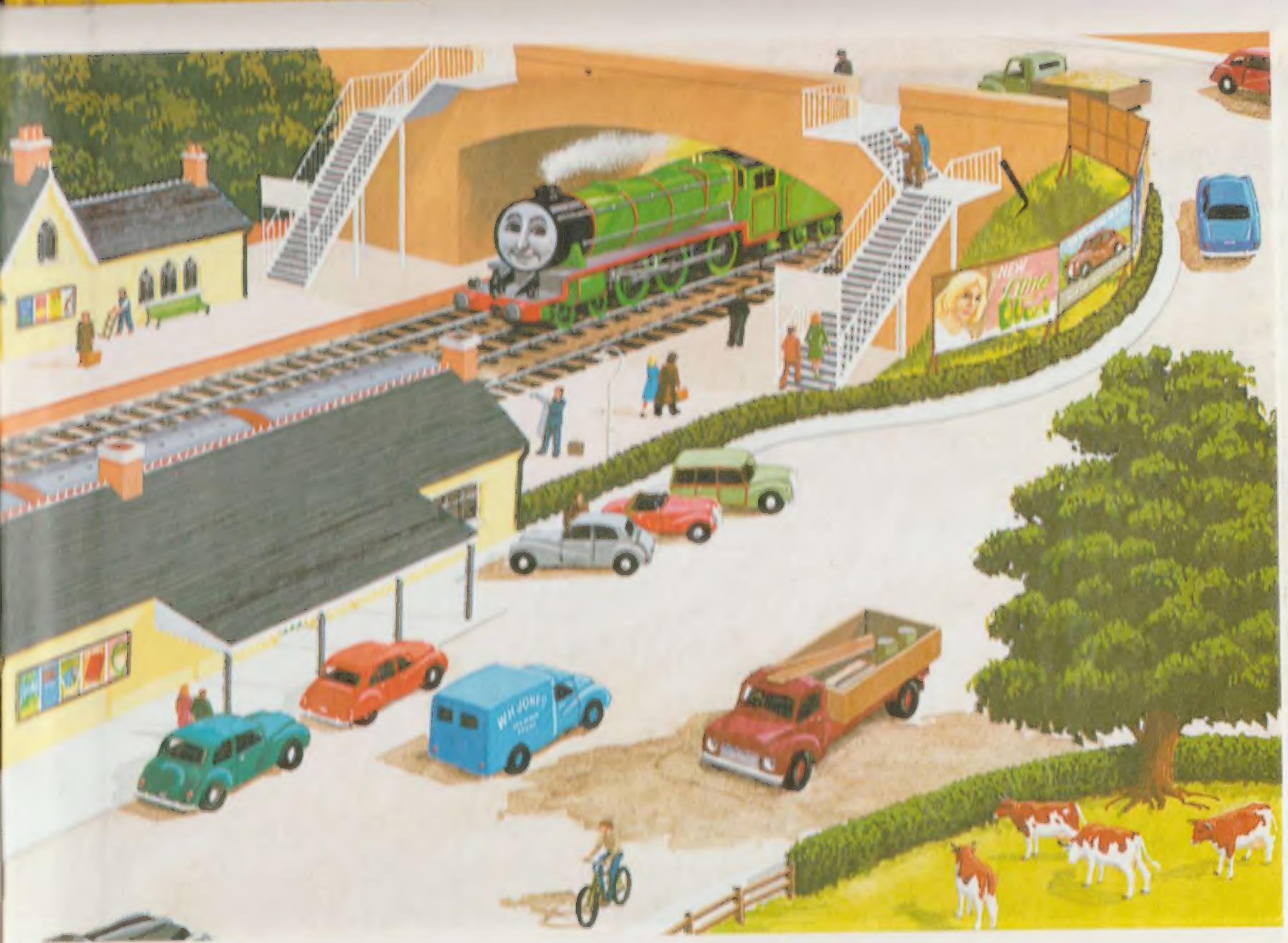
Carefully Thomas took the strain. Slowly, with water cascading all round him, Ben came out of the ‘Drain’. Once he was clear, Thomas was properly coupled to him, and helped him back to his Shed.

“Thank you Thomas,” said Ben gratefully, and his eyes twinkled for the first time for several hours.

It was four days before the water in the ‘Drain’ subsided. When Bill reached home, both twins agreed that it would be ungrateful of them ever to tease Thomas again.







Thomas and the Twins

Christopher Awdry

When Thomas went to help on Edward's branch line he didn't bargain for Bill and Ben, the china clay twins, as well. His stay there was more exciting than he expected, and by the time he left he had certainly earned the twins' respect.

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